

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



2005 Year in Review

For New Jersey Agriculture, 2005 was a year of extremes, from some of the hottest and driest weather in June, July and August to some of the wettest in September and October. These extremes provided many challenges to our farmers, and some lost yield as a result of the weather. However, the quality of the majority of our state's crops was very good. 2005 is an example of the tenacity of the state's agricultural community and of the New Jersey Department of Agriculture's commitment to keeping the state green and growing.

While there were challenges, there also were many achievements. Some major objectives were accomplished in 2005:

- ☑ The Division of Animal Health has led the effort to ensure that Avian Influenza in all domestic bird populations is controlled and eradicated so it does not have a chance to mutate into a strain that could seriously impact human health.
- ☑ Great strides have been made in eradicating the Asian longhorned beetle from the Middlesex/Union County and Jersey City/Hoboken infestation areas.
- ☑ The Department continued its effort to help communities plan for agriculture by developing a Smart Growth Toolkit to give planners and community leaders hands-on tools based on the Department's 2003 Smart Growth plan, which includes: farmland preservation, agricultural land use planning, economic development, natural resource conservation, and agricultural industry sustainability.
- ☑ Recognizing the need to help producers keep costs down and increase their bottom lines, create new markets and encourage the development of new energy-related uses for agricultural products while protecting the environment, the Department developed a Green Energy Initiative promoting the use of solar, wind and renewable fuels.
- ☑ The most comprehensive Child Nutrition Rule in the nation -- made official in June 2005 -- was the culmination of the multi-agency Healthy Choices, Healthy Kids campaign announced in May 2003 that sought to combat a national epidemic of childhood obesity and promote better nutrition. The rule requires that students in New Jersey schools have healthy food choices, be given useful nutrition information and be encouraged to be more active.

Following are the highlights of these accomplishments:

Avian Influenza



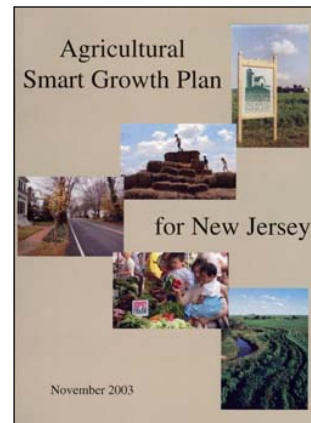
Surveillance was increased this year to lower the incidence of Avian Influenza in the live bird marketing system following the outbreak of Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza (LPAI) in our neighboring states. Additional measures were also recommended to commercial poultry operators throughout the state to protect these valuable resources. The Division of Animal Health implemented additional protective measures to prevent infected birds from entering the state.

Since the LPAI program was initiated in New Jersey, the prevalence of infected live bird markets dropped from 43 percent to less than 2 percent. A monitored flock program was created to allow New Jersey residents a means to ensure that their birds are healthy and marketable in this system. Monitoring for LPAI provides for an immediate response in the event there is an identification of a more pathogenic strain of this virus in the state.

To complement the Division's efforts, an Avian Influenza web page was established by the Department at www.state.nj.us/agriculture/avianinfluenza.htm. The page provides information about New Jersey and federal efforts to control and eradicate avian influenza.

Planning for Agriculture

In 2003, New Jersey was the first state in the nation to develop an agricultural Smart Growth Plan to get those involved in planning in the state to include agriculture as an important component to New Jersey communities. The plan provided guidance to better prioritize statewide farmland preservation activities, help farmers be more successful and position agriculture for a strong future.



In 2005, a Smart Growth Planner's Toolkit was developed to accompany the plan. The web-based toolkit offers resources to help municipal governments, businesses, non-profit groups, and local citizens plan to retain agriculture in their communities, along with the many benefits it provides.

The tool kit at www.state.nj.us/agriculture/toolkit.htm provides hands-on tools in each of the five linked components of the Smart Growth Plan: Farmland Preservation, Agricultural Land Use Planning, Economic Development, Natural Resource Conservation and Agricultural Industry Sustainability.

It includes, for example, links for those interested in Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) -- a planning technique that allows local municipalities the ability to transfer growth out of areas they would like to preserve and cluster development in other areas.

Visitors to the site will be able to find information on all the farmland preservation funding opportunities available and the Farm Link program, which helps connect those interested in

buying and selling preserved farmland. There is a test for communities to determine if their towns are farm friendly and they can go to a site that will help them conduct a build-out analysis that assists communities in understanding what the current zoning will permit if built to capacity.

A number of marketing opportunities for farmers are detailed in the site, and there also is a link to the Department's 2005 Economic Development strategies for 10 sectors of agriculture. Right to Farm is addressed and information is provided on assistance available to communities, landowners and farmers in protecting their soil and water resources.

Green Energy Initiative

With energy costs continuing to increase, the Department developed a Green Energy Strategy encouraging farmers to integrate alternative energy into their operations and to develop new markets through production of commodities-based bio-fuels. The strategy promotes the use of solar, wind, and renewable fuels to lower operation costs.



To assist farmers in making the best choices to meet their needs, the Department offered guidance to the farm community on renewable energy and energy efficiency improvement projects that could reduce farmers' dependence on energy produced from foreign oil and reduce farm-operating expenses. Information regarding the availability of

United States Department of Agriculture and New Jersey Board of Public Utilities grants was provided to the farm community.

To provide easy access to information on Green Energy issues and resources for New Jersey farmers, the Department developed an informative and helpful web page located at www.state.nj.us/agriculture/greenenergy.htm. The page spells out the Department's Green Energy Strategy and provides many links to assist those in the agriculture industry find up-to-date information on what's available in New Jersey.

In addition, the Department developed a "Guide to Using the New Jersey Clean Energy Website to Determine if Solar Energy is Cost Effective For Your Farming Operation" to help farmers navigate the New Jersey Clean Energy website at www.njcleanenergy.com

Nutrition Rule

By September 1, 2007, New Jersey school districts will be required to adopt a comprehensive statewide policy that will ban soda and junk foods, and teach better eating habits. In June of 2005, the Department along with Acting Governor Richard J. Codey announced the adoption of the nation's most comprehensive school nutrition rule.

Once implemented statewide, the School Nutrition Policy will apply to all vending machines, cafeteria a la carte lines, snack bars, school stores, fundraisers and the reimbursable After School Snack Program.

Under the policy:

The following may not be served, sold or given out free as promotion anywhere on school policy at any time before the end of the school day:

- Foods of minimal nutritional value, as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This includes a ban on soda.
- Items listing sugar in any form as the first ingredient.
- All forms of candy.



Schools will reduce the purchase of any products containing trans fats.

All snack and beverage items must meet the following requirements:

- No more than 8 grams of total fat per serving, and no more than 2 grams of saturated fat per serving.
- All beverages shall not exceed 12 ounces except water, or milk containing 2 percent or less fat.
- Whole milk shall not exceed 8 ounces.

Each school's curriculum must include nutrition education.

Asian Longhorned Beetle

In Jersey City/Hoboken in 2002-03 and again in Middlesex and Union Counties in 2004-05, the Division of Plant Industry -- working with federal partners -- took the necessary steps to



stop this tree-killing insect from devastating New Jersey's urban forests. In 2005, tree removal continued in the Middlesex/Union County infestation area. The Department worked with the state Department of Environmental Protection Forestry Service to replace trees that were taken down. Jersey City/Hoboken saw another year with no sign of the beetle and was put in the position to be deregulated, ending the quarantine in that area.

Through these and other initiatives, the Department continued to work to achieve the seven major goals set forth in its Strategic Plan and to ensure a successful agricultural and food industry, protect natural resources that sustain it, and support the health and welfare of the general public.

2005 Accomplishments

Goal 1: Preserve Farms

Permanently preserve and retain the maximum amount of New Jersey farmland to maintain a viable agriculture and food industry, and promote smart growth and a high quality of life for New Jersey citizens.

▶ **Statewide Farmland Preservation Totals** -- One hundred farms covering 9,000 acres were preserved in 2005, lifting statewide preservation totals to 1,322 farms covering 141,866 acres. With more than 17 percent of its total farmland permanently protected, New Jersey continues to lead the nation in percentage of available farmland preserved.

▶ **Pinelands Preservation** -- Five farms covering 2,352 acres were preserved in the Pinelands in 2005. To date, 7,898 acres have been permanently preserved in the Pinelands region. Due to interest from counties and landowners, the SADC scheduled another county easement purchase round in Spring 2006 specifically for Pinelands farms. The application deadline is early March.

▶ **Highlands Preservation** -- Thirty-seven farms covering 2,764 acres were preserved in the Highlands in 2005, boosting farmland preservation totals in that region to more than 23,000 acres to date. The SADC proposed a definition of “farmer” to implement the provision of the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act that provides for an alternate appraisal valuation – based on zoning, state environmental laws and DEP regulations in effect as of January 1, 2004 – under certain circumstances, including in cases where the landowner is a farmer. The Department of Agriculture and SADC remain committed to permanently protecting farmland in the Highlands and will continue to draw on every resource available to preserve Highlands farms and strengthen the agricultural industry in that region. Legislation allocating \$15 million specifically dedicated for the preservation of Highlands farms was signed into law in August.

▶ **Burlington County Reaches 20,000 Mark** -- In May, Burlington County celebrated the county surpassing the 20,000-acre milestone for farmland preservation with an event at the newly preserved 300-acre Reuben Greenberg Farm in Mansfield. Burlington County was the first county in the state to preserve 20,000 acres of farmland.



Secretary Kuperus and Burlington County Freeholder William Haines at ceremony.

▶ **Streamlining Preservation Procedures** -- A process review committee appointed by the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) issued a series of recommendations to streamline and improve farmland preservation processes to make the Farmland Preservation Program more predictable, efficient and effective while continuing to be accountable. The SADC expects to propose a rule in early 2006 to implement the recommendations. They include offering a countywide planning incentive grant program as

an alternative to the traditional county grants program, which will eliminate administrative duplication at the state and county levels, shorten the timeframe from application to preservation by six months or more, encourage a more comprehensive planning approach to preservation and provide financial incentives to counties to expend funding as expeditiously as possible. Under the SADC's direct easement purchase and fee simple programs, the SADC will strategically target and solicit farmland preservation applications to ensure the most important farmland is preserved in each county, and conduct appraisals prior to entering into contracts with landowners to ensure a fair negotiation process.

▶ **Expanded Right to Farm Protections Sought** -- The SADC drafted new rules that would expand the list of protected agricultural activities under the Right to Farm Act to include equine-related service activities and set forth agricultural management practices for commercial equine activities. The SADC also drafted agricultural management practices for agri-tourism activities. Pre-proposals for both the equine and agri-tourism proposals were distributed for public comment and are being reviewed by the SADC for further action in early 2006. The SADC also plans to begin developing agricultural management practices for farm markets and greenhouses in 2006.

▶ **Farmland Preservation Funding Approved** -- Governor Codey in August signed into law legislation allocating \$141.6 million for farmland preservation projects statewide – the largest annual allocation in the history of the program. The funding covers a number of programs in which the SADC, county and local governments, and nonprofit organizations purchase the development easements (or development rights) on farmland or purchase farmland outright for preservation purposes. Included was \$45 million for grants to counties to fund the costs to preserve 122 farms covering 7,540 acres – the largest allocation for the county grants program to date.

▶ **TDR Planning Assistance Grants Awarded** -- The State Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Bank Board in October approved \$40,000 matching grants to five municipalities to help them conduct the planning necessary to implement successful transfer of development rights programs. Planning assistance grants were approved for Fanwood Borough, Union County; Berkeley Township, Ocean County; Montgomery Township, Somerset County; Hopewell Township, Cumberland County, and Woolwich Township, Gloucester County. TDR programs are designed to encourage a shift in growth away from a municipality's critical agricultural, environmental, open space or historic areas to areas that can accommodate growth. A total of up to \$1.5 million is available for the grants program. Applications for planning assistance grants will continue to be accepted and awarded on a rolling basis subject to funding availability.

▶ **Farmland Assessment Information Guide Released** -- To help maintain stability for Farmland Assessment, a new user friendly informational guide was released to assist both landowners and municipal tax assessors in understanding the requirements to qualify. The Department receives numerous calls about farmland assessment and works cooperatively with the Division of Taxation in resolving issues. The guide is now available online at www.state.nj.us/agriculture/FarmlandAssessmentGuide.pdf.

▶ **Agricultural Smart Growth Toolkit Available** -- In 2005, the New Jersey Agricultural Smart Growth Plan was revised to reflect updated information in the area of planning for agriculture. To help guide planners, the Agricultural Smart Growth Toolkit

was announced in March and is continually updated to ensure access to the latest information, services, and programs. Agriculture must be part of the equation when talking about “smart” planning. By sustaining agriculture, the quality of life enjoyed by New Jersey residents is protected.

Goal 2: Protect and Conserve Natural and Agricultural Resources

Encourage and support stewardship of agricultural and urban open land and other natural resources to protect and enhance fertile soils, clean water, and productive and healthy animal and plant resources.

► **Avian Influenza** -- In October, New Jersey and Pennsylvania Departments of Agriculture agreed to work together on improving health standards and biosecurity at live bird markets. The states are working cooperatively on Avian Influenza testing procedures. New Jersey has approved a proposal for regulations adopting much of the USDA standards for prevention and control low-path Avian Influenza in the live bird marketing system and Pennsylvania intends to propose adoption of many of the standards.



In March, poultry dealers, distributors and producers from New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and New York met at the Livestock Cooperative Auction Hackettstown. The meeting was called to address the questions and concerns that have arisen regarding the State of New Jersey's avian influenza testing and importation requirements. Additional meetings throughout the year have included the poultry industry as well as state and federal regulatory agencies to continue to advise and inform the industry about protective measures to be employed against potential AI outbreaks.

In 2005, the Division of Animal Health performed approximately 430 inspections on live bird markets and poultry distributors and 2,932 tests on live bird markets, poultry distributors and backyard flocks. The number of birds tested is over 14,000. The Division also sent 3,709 samples to the National Veterinary Services Laboratories for testing in 2005.

► **Asian Longhorned Beetle** -- In August 2004, a significant Asian longhorned beetle infestation was found in Carteret and Woodbridge, Middlesex County, and Rahway and Linden, Union County. Tree climbers and other specialists from the Department and USDA surveyed more than 56,000 trees. In all, 10,658 host trees were removed in the takedown zones; 518 of these were confirmed as infested, while 21,000 host trees were treated with the preventive insecticide, imidacloprid. The New Jersey Forest Service managed the planting of 2,112 replacement trees in 2005. In July 2005, five new infested trees were found in the southeast section of Linden in Union County and the quarantine area was increased to 16.5 square miles. No new municipalities were added to the quarantine zone. Survey work is ongoing to determine the number



Twelve USDA-FS Smokejumpers conducted survey efforts for the ALB.

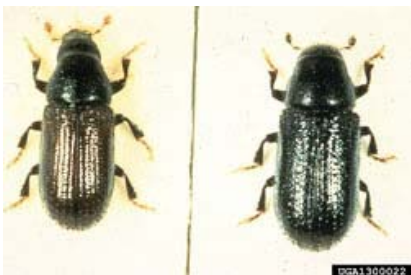
of nearby high-risk host trees that will be removed as a result of the newly found infested trees. A web page for Asian longhorned beetle www.state.nj.us/agriculture/alblinks.htm was developed and regular communications were sent weekly on an as-needed basis.

► **Soybean Rust** -- In November 2004, the Asian soybean rust, *Phakopsora pachyrhizi*, was first found in the United States in Louisiana. Soybean rust is a serious disease causing crop losses in many parts of the world. The Department secured Section 18 emergency exemption approvals from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Pesticide Control Program and the EPA for a range of fungicides to control soybean rust. The Department worked with Rutgers Cooperative Research and Extension to develop control recommendations for New Jersey growers, and also worked with Rutgers Cooperative Research and Extension and the United States Department of Agriculture National Soybean Rust Surveillance Program to monitor sentinel plots to detect the disease and gauge its severity. Soybean rust was not found in New Jersey in 2005.



► **Gypsy Moth Presence Increases Dramatically in 2005** -- A drier than usual spring helped gypsy moth caterpillars establish a much greater presence in some New Jersey counties in 2005. Gypsy moth caterpillars were responsible for about 44,000 acres of defoliation, compared to about 6,500 acres in 2004. The hardest-hit counties were Ocean, Burlington, Monmouth and Sussex. A naturally occurring fungus has helped New Jersey officials control the gypsy moth population in recent years. The fungus, *Entomophaga maimaiga*, typically kills gypsy moths in the caterpillar stage before they can reproduce. However, the fungus is reliant on moisture to thrive and do damage to the caterpillars, and the drier weather stunted its growth, giving the caterpillars an advantage. The Department's Division of Plant Industry worked with municipalities hardest hit by the caterpillars to use the insecticide spray known as *Bacillus thuringiensis*, or Bt, to suppress the populations. Bt is a non-chemical, "minimal risk" insecticide that kills only caterpillars. It does not harm other insects, animals or humans.

► **Pineshoot Beetle Discovered in Five Northern Counties** -- The pine shoot beetle, an invasive pest that stunts the growth of pine trees, has been found in New Jersey in several northern counties. The beetle, a native of Europe discovered most recently in the United States in 1992, attacks new shoots of pine trees. It also can attack stressed pines by breeding under the bark at the base of the tree. The beetle can seriously harm the health of trees and even kill them when present in large enough numbers. The beetles prefer Scotch pines, but will feed and reproduce in most pine species. While the beetle can seriously harm the health of pine trees, and even kill them, it can be easily managed in Christmas tree plantations and nurseries. The beetles do not attack Blue Spruce, Norway Spruce, Douglas fir, and Fraser Fir, which are commonly used as Christmas trees. The beetles found in New Jersey were detected in surveillance traps in Bergen, Hunterdon, Passaic, Sussex and Warren counties. A pine shoot beetle webpage was developed at: www.state.nj.us/agriculture/pineshootbeetle.htm.



▶ **Ensuring Safety of Plants and Plant Material** -- In 2005, the nursery inspection staff inspected over 18,887 acres in 874 nurseries to certify freedom from dangerous insects and diseases. The list of certified nurseries and plant dealers is posted on the Division's web site and is updated monthly. The Division's inspectors issued 171 state and 310 federal phytosanitary certificates enabling export of plants and plant material to other states or countries.

▶ **Canine Influenza Virus** -- The Department of Agriculture worked closely with New Jersey's animal care providers to inform them about canine influenza, a virus that is a threat to dogs in the state, and assist them in identifying dogs afflicted with the virus. The Department offered preliminary screening of suspected cases of the virus. Canine influenza presents itself much like the common kennel cough. Less than 5 percent of infected animals die from the disease.

▶ **Equine Encephalitis** -- Four horses in New Jersey were diagnosed with Equine Eastern Encephalitis (EEE) in 2005. EEE is a rare but serious disease that causes an inflammation of the brain tissue. Young horses lacking the protection afforded by a vaccine are particularly susceptible to infection. There also were two cases of EEE in alpacas. In 2004, there were six confirmed cases of EEE in horses in New Jersey. The Department actively advocates vaccination as the best protection against EEE.

▶ **Soil and Water Conservation Projects Funded** -- The SADC approved a record \$2.3 million in cost-sharing grants to help fund 131 soil and water conservation projects on farms that are permanently preserved or enrolled in eight-year preservation programs. The SADC this year increased its cost-sharing grants from up to 50 percent of eligible costs with a maximum award of \$50,000 per landowner, to up to 75 percent of eligible costs with a maximum award of \$75,000 to encourage more landowners to undertake these projects. Soil and water conservation projects include those designed to control and prevent soil erosion and sediment damages; control pollution on farmland; impound, store and manage water for agricultural purposes, or improve management of land and soils to achieve maximum agricultural productivity.

▶ **CREP Event** -- A 3,400-foot-long grass waterway to reduce soil erosion was installed on a Salem County dairy and grain farm – the first conservation practice installed in the state through New Jersey Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). CREP is a state-federal partnership effort to work with farmers to convert pastureland or cropland along streams from production to natural grasses, trees and other vegetation to provide buffers. A total of \$100 million is available for this program -- \$77 million in federal funds and \$23 million in state funds.



This grass waterway at the Emel Farm in Mannington Township was the 1st project under the NJ CREP program

▶ **NJ Annual Conservation Conference** -- Nearly 75 percent of New Jersey's Soil Conservation District supervisors, along with conservation partners and district staff, attended the October Annual Conservation Conference held in Atlantic City. The theme of

the conference, *Living the New Jersey Legacy*, recognized by a Proclamation from Acting Governor Codey, marked the 30th Anniversary of implementation of the Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Act. Since its inception, the Act has impacted the development of more than 771,000 acres of land, in accordance with stormwater management, soil erosion and sediment control standards adopted by the Department.

▶ **Semi-Permanent Pesticide Container Recycling Program** -- A free plastic pesticide container collection program at the Cumberland County Solid Waste Complex in Deerfield Township ran from May through October, saving participants in excess of \$55 per ton in landfill tipping fees. Non-refillable, high-density polyethylene # 2 (HDPE #2) containers used by agricultural, professional and commercial pesticide applicators were accepted at the collection site. Containers had to be no larger than 55 gallons and properly rinsed.

▶ **Agriculture and Green Energy** -- The Agricultural Economic Development program developed a guide for farmers to determine if solar energy is cost effective for their farming operation. This guide is on New Jersey Department of Agriculture's website www.state.nj.us/agriculture/Solarenergyguide.pdf and complements the New Jersey Clean Energy website provided by the Board of Public Utilities.



▶ **Ethanol Support** -- Garden State Ethanol was awarded \$1 million in federal funding to help fund development of an ethanol production facility in New Jersey. The funding was made possible by the work of Senator Jon Corzine and the New Jersey Congressional Delegation.

Check presented to Garden State Ethanol by Department of Agriculture.

▶ **Deer Fence Program** -- The New Jersey Department of Agriculture allocated \$300,000 to the 2004/2005 deer fence program. Of the 118 farmers who applied for the program, 100 were awarded fencing and related materials. Two mandatory training workshops were held (August and October) where farmers received hands-on instruction from professionals on how to install the fencing and other helpful advice. Fifty-three farmers received the maximum award of 5,000 linear feet of fence, 10,000 linear feet of accompanying wire and 50 posts.

▶ **Animal Waste Management Information Sessions** -- The New Jersey Department of Agriculture, the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service, Rutgers Cooperative Research and Extension, and New Jersey Farm Bureau hosted a series of three outreach sessions in May to discuss the basics of management of animal waste on agricultural operations. Sessions were held in the Northern, Central and Southern parts of the state. Topics discussed included: reasons for managing animal waste; how animal manure can be used as a resource; information on neighboring states' programs; basic housekeeping practices; and, an update on the draft New Jersey Department of Agriculture Animal Waste Management Rule.

▶ **Developed and adopted the Humane Standards for Livestock** -- The Division of Animal Health was responsible for the development of and adoption of the humane standards, the first comprehensive humane regulations strictly for livestock in the country. These standards use a holistic approach to determine if an animal is being treated in an inhuman manner. It ensures that practices that are taught in land grant universities, agricultural extension agencies and schools of veterinary medicine are not deemed cruel by laymen and will be modified as new science becomes available on the humane treatment and care of livestock. Since the adoption in June 2004 the division has investigated over 80 alleged abuse cases.

Goal 3: Protect Producers and Consumers by Ensuring Safe, High-Quality Agricultural Products and Services

Administer fair and effective regulatory, inspection, grading and other quality assurance programs for food agricultural products and agricultural inputs.

▶ **Garden State Dairy Alliance** --

In 2005, the Garden State Dairy Alliance was initiated by the department to provide better services to the New Jersey dairy farmers and supporting industry, and to develop a more comprehensive,



efficient delivery of programs offered by the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, Rutgers's New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, and New Jersey Farm Bureau. This multi-disciplinary approach allows greater accessibility for the farmer while at the same time limiting the amount of time spent with each agency thereby minimizing farm visits. This enables the farmer to spend more time working on the farm while maximizing the amount of services that are offered to him and allowing opportunities for increased farm profitability. A webpage was launched at: www.state.nj.us/agriculture/dairyalliance.htm that describes all the services and assistance available to dairy farmers.

▶ **Vine-Ripened Tomato Rule** --

A new rule requires tomatoes sold as “vine-ripened” to actually have ripened on the vine and not through treatment with ethylene gas to begin the ripening process. Previously, tomatoes that were harvested while still green and ripened with ethylene could be called “vine-ripened,” which some in the trade and consumers might pay a premium price for. The goal is to not only allow producers to compete effectively in the New Jersey market, but also to ensure that New Jersey consumers are getting a product that does not bear a misleading label. The new rule sets forth the standards for labeling tomatoes as vine-ripened. Tomatoes must obtain some discernible degree of pink or red color before being removed from the vine and may not be treated with ethylene gas in order to be labeled as vine ripened. The proposed new rule also sets forth penalties for the improper labeling of vine-ripened tomatoes, which begin at \$50 per carton for a first offense, and the procedures to obtain a hearing in the event of a violation.

▶ **Premium Peach Rule** --



The Jersey Fresh Premium Peach standard was derived from a recommendation of the New Jersey Peach Industry Task Force. The task force was created in 2003 and appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture to help sustain the New Jersey peach market. The voluntary standards will help distinguish New Jersey peaches, add value, and provide a competitive advantage in the market place. To bear the premium peach label, peaches will be packed and shipped within seven days, and meet the United States Department of Agriculture's U.S. Fancy Grade and must be inspected by a New Jersey Department of Agriculture inspector to ensure they meet the requirements of the U.S. Fancy Grade.

▶ **Jersey Fresh Wine** -- The Department of Agriculture expanded the Jersey Fresh program to also include wines made with fruit produced in the Garden State. The voluntary Jersey Fresh standards would apply to wine products which score at least a 13 out of 20 in the Quality Wine Alliance program (QWA). The New Jersey QWA program was started in 1999 and is based on a 20-point wine evaluation scale that was developed at the University of California-Davis. This evaluation scale gives points for appearance, color, aroma and bouquet, acesence, total acid, sugar, body, flavor, astringency and general quality. Wines that meet or exceed the rigorous review process are awarded the QWA designation.

▶ **Organic Rule** -- In December 2005, the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture approved a rule proposed that defines the New Jersey Organic Certification Program. To make an organic label claim, organic farmers and organic processors generating over \$5,000 in organic sales are required to be certified by a third party USDA accredited certification agent. For years, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture has helped support the Northeast Organic Farming Association's (NOFA-NJ's) Organic Certification Program. The NOFA-NJ organic certification program has been certifying organic growers and businesses since 1990. In 2002, the USDA implemented the National Organic Program, and NOFA-NJ's standards for organic certification were replaced with the National Organic Program Final Rule. Organic certification was now a governmentally regulated program. Approval of the proposed regulations by the State Board of Agriculture was an important step in the process of transferring the Organic Certification Program from NOFA-NJ into the state Department of Agriculture. The Department is currently working with NOFA-NJ in preparing the application required for USDA accreditation of the New Jersey Organic Certification Program.



▶ **TOPOFF 3** -- On April 4-8, New Jersey, Connecticut, the United Kingdom and Canada participated in the TOPOFF 3 Exercise. TOPOFF, an abbreviation for Top Officials, is a series of exercises designed to strengthen the nation's capacity to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks. In New Jersey, the exercise simulated a release of the plague in Union and Middlesex Counties. Staff participated at the Agriculture Building and the Divisions of Animal Health and Food & Nutrition staffed emergency operation centers for 78 hours. The Department's goal for this exercise was to test its communications network with its constituents, who reported a high level of success in receiving NJDA messages in a timely fashion.



▶ **Best Management Practices Posters** -- Posters were generated for distribution to school food service operations describing to workers best management practices to follow to ensure better ensure safety. In conjunction with the posters, biosecurity checklists were developed for use by those entities.

▶ **Jersey Fresh** -- The Jersey Fresh Quality Grading program had a record 287 participants for the 2005 growing season. Division staff visited supermarkets in the South Jersey area to encourage produce managers to buy *Jersey Fresh* whenever possible and to promote Jersey fresh produce in their stores.

▶ **Farm Certification Program (Third-Party Audits)** -- A logo was created for the New Jersey Department of Agriculture Farm Certification Program, which incorporated the *Jersey Fresh* logo. This logo is for use by growers who participate in the Jersey Fresh Quality Grading Program and have passed an NJDA-USDA Good Agricultural Practices/Good Handling Practices Third Party Audit. Twenty-one New Jersey packers/producers successfully completed the GAP/GHP Third Party Audit in 2005. This represents a 52 percent increase from 2004.



▶ **Produce Bonding** -- Legislation to amend the surety requirements for vendors buying produce on credit from New Jersey producers was signed into law. The measures require surety to be posted to cover 100 percent of purchases up to a maximum of \$150,000 annually. The measures also authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to establish a surety fund into which credit purchasers would pay to cover any defaults on payments to producers.

▶ **Dairy Program** -- Following the completion of the feasibility study for “Jersey Fresh” value-added milk the department crafted an ongoing program, “Options for Dairy Producers in Commodity and Value-Added Marketing” designed to aid producers in making marketing decisions that best fit their farms business and risk structure. This program is designed to complement the efforts of the Garden State Agricultural Re-Engineering Initiative, Milk Quality Program and New Jersey Cattle Health Assurance Programs offered through the Garden State Dairy Alliance.

▶ **Agricultural Chemistry Program** -- These programs are administered to protect farmers and consumers by determining the manufacturer’s compliance with the guaranteed content of feed, fertilizer and liming materials and to reduce the amount of misbranded and deficient products offered for sale, thereby insuring the quality and quantity of these materials and promoting crop yield. The Department collected and analyzed 982 random samples. In cases of deficient product, warnings or penalties were issued. Penalties received for deficient fertilizers are returned to farmers to offset losses that may have been caused by lower-quality product. During the last fiscal year, \$27,982.60 has been refunded to farmers.

▶ **Crop Insurance for Forage Production** -- Garden State farmers have the opportunity to obtain crop insurance for forage production in 2006. The insured forage crop may be either a stand of pure alfalfa, or alfalfa and perennial grasses in which alfalfa comprises more than 25 percent of the ground cover. Each year, New Jersey farmers produce over 250,000 tons of hay on approximately 120,000 acres of cropland. Alfalfa hay accounts for 30,000 acres and other (mixed) hay, 90,000 acres. The hay produced has a value of more than \$30 million annually.

Goal 4: Support and Expand Profitable, Innovative Agricultural and Food Industry Development

Foster agricultural economic growth, profitability and a positive business climate through technical and financial assistance, market development, and effective product and industry promotion.

► **Agri-tourism Study** -- To determine the impact of the agri-tourism industry on the state's economy, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture authorized Rutgers University's Food Policy Institute to conduct a \$58,000 comprehensive one-year study on



agri-tourism in the Garden State, which is expected to be completed in spring 2006. Last year, members were named to the New Jersey Agri-Tourism Industry Advisory Council, whose charge is to develop and expand the agri-tourism industry in the state. However, the current scope of the industry in the state is unknown since there has never been any formal accounting as to the extent of the industry. The five objectives of the survey are: identify and locate New Jersey farm operations that offer some form of agri-tourism activity; examine farmers' and farm

leaders' perceptions of the opportunities presented by agri-tourism, as well as the challenges; document the type and scale of agri-tourism activities offered on New Jersey farms; evaluate the characteristics of farms engaging in agri-tourism, including the economic and non-economic benefits of agri-tourism; and, conduct a preliminary review of ordinances in a cross-section of municipalities to assess their compatibility with agri-tourism industry development. To view the Department's agri-tourism webpage, go to:

www.state.nj.us/jerseyfresh/agritourismhome.htm.

► **New Advertising Agency** -- In 2005, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture awarded its three-year *Jersey Fresh* advertising, marketing and promotional contract to CMD & Partners, Fairfield, New Jersey. The goal of the new advertising campaign will be to reinvigorate the Jersey Fresh name in order to leverage the brand's equity while also increasing purchase and awareness of *Jersey Fresh* and its *Jersey Grown* and *Jersey Seafood* programs.

► **Economic Development** -- In an effort to improve the economic return to New Jersey's farmers in the produce, horticulture, seafood, dairy, field crop, livestock, poultry, organic, equine, wine, and the agri-tourism agricultural sectors, 86 out of 101 of the Department's 2005 Economic Development Strategies have been completed or are making progress toward completion. The 2005 Strategies are on the web at:

www.state.nj.us/agriculture/05ecostrat.htm.

► **Community Farmers Markets Visits** -- Seven new community farmers markets opened in 2005, bringing the number of markets to nearly 80 statewide. The new markets opened in Middlesex, Fort Lee, Toms River, Vineland, Sergeantsville, Lawrenceville and Hamilton Park. The Department continues to work with towns and organizations interested in developing new markets, which benefit farmers and consumers by making fresh from the farm produce accessible to more parts of the state and expanding markets for farmers,

Assembly members Gordon Johnson and Loretta Weinberg promote importance of community farmers markets in renewing the downtown of Englewood..



► **Reciprocity Agreement** -- New Jersey and Pennsylvania signed an agreement in May allowing operators of farm vehicles to drive their vehicles across state borders. The reciprocal agreement recognizes each state's exemption from the commercial drivers license requirement for farmers, enabling farmers to drive their vehicles into the other state without being cited. States have the authority to exempt certain drivers, including operators of farm vehicles, from the commercial drivers license (CDL) requirement, which both New Jersey and Pennsylvania have done. Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration regulations limit use of the CDL exemptions for the operators of farm vehicles to the driver's home state unless there is a reciprocity agreement with adjoining states.

► **Value-added Grant Award** -- A group of seven aquaculture producers was

Assemblymen Gibson, Conover, and Van Drew along with USDA's Andrew Law and Secretary Kuperus present grant check to Clam Group.



awarded a \$47,100 USDA Value-Added Producer Grant to market clams under the *Jersey Seafood* brand name. The seven entrepreneurs of the newly formed New Jersey Seafood Marketing Group will use the grant to begin their efforts to launch and market a *Jersey Seafood* brand of clams. New Jersey Department of Agriculture staff, as well as professionals

from Rutgers Cooperative Extension and Food Innovation Center, will assist the group in its marketing efforts. The group will be the first in the state using newly developed Jersey Seafood standards and brand logo for an aquacultured product. The New Jersey Seafood Marketing group, led by George Mathis – a third generation bayman who operates Mathis Clam Farm in Egg Harbor Township – will sell high quality, fresh, locally-raised hard clams in mesh bags at local retail establishments and farm markets.

► **Promotion of New Jersey's Agricultural Sectors** –

- ***Aquaculture/Agri-tourism*** -- The Department highlighted the harvest and auction of Japanese koi, a popular ornamental fish for backyard decorative ponds, as a unique, new type of agri-tourism. In October, Secretary Kuperus participated in the event at Quality Koi Company's Nisei Koi Farm in Penns Grove.
- ***Seafood*** -- To continue to support and strengthen the New Jersey seafood industry, the Department arranged for a seafood chef and Secretary Kuperus to cook Jersey seafood on Comcast's "Eye On Ocean County." The show aired on Comcast in Ocean County in November 2005.
- ***Agriculture Tours*** -- In April 2005, Secretary Kuperus escorted Assemblyman Douglas Fisher on a tour of five Salem and Gloucester County farms, representing New Jersey's diverse agriculture, in an effort to highlight the needs of farmers in South Jersey. In June, Monmouth County agriculture was celebrated with a tour that covered the horticulture, seafood, agritourism, and produce sectors.
- ***Produce Retailers*** -- Supermarkets that made commitments to buy *Jersey Fresh* produce were promoted during the summer with the Department supporting Jersey Fresh Day at the Super Foodtown of Ocean Township in Monmouth County and Secretary Kuperus talking to children from the Boys and Girls Club of Wayne about the benefits of eating fresh produce while visiting the Stop and Shop in Wayne.
- ***Produce Industry*** -- The Department highlighted a successful operation in which South Jersey farmers and food processors make prepared eggplant dishes for various trades. Secretary Kuperus visited the COMARCO Products plant in Camden in September to see the operation that processes up to 6.5 million pounds of eggplant and 6 million pounds of peppers, squash and zucchini per year, much of which comes from New Jersey farms.
- ***Christmas Trees*** -- Black Oak Farm in Bethlehem, Hunterdon County, won the New Jersey Christmas Tree Growers' Association's annual contest for best Christmas tree. Owner Robert Housedorf, who won for his Norway Spruce, has won the contest three out of the last four years.
- ***Horticulture*** -- In December, Secretary Kuperus addressed the Professional Landscape Alliance of New Jersey (PLANJ) at the group's first ever "Winter Showcase" and the New Jersey Nursery and Landscape Association (NJNLA) at that group's annual dinner and awards ceremony, which brought together professionals from the nursery, landscape and retail garden center sectors.



Assemblyman Joe Azzolina at his Super Foodtown store in Ocean Twsp. celebrating Jersey Fresh with Secretary Kuperus

► **Supermarket Tour** -- Top Department officials visited major food retailers in the state in May to talk about their buying patterns for the 2005 produce season. Many reported they would be looking to increase their purchases of Jersey Fresh products for their superior freshness and taste, especially this year with the costs associated with transporting produce from longer distances. The increases in fuel costs were anticipated to hike the price of

bringing a single truckload of produce from California to as high as \$6,000 to \$7,000 this year, leading the retailers to focus more heavily on buying locally.

► **Jersey Fresh Breakfast** -- The Department of Agriculture's annual Jersey Fresh Breakfast was held at Drumthwacket in July 2005 to rally support for purchases of



Jersey Fresh produce by the supermarkets and other retail outlets in the state. Governor Richard Codey addressed the group, reinforcing the partnership between food retailers and producers in their support of the Jersey Fresh brand, which helps sustain the food and agriculture industries.

Board of Agriculture members McNaughton, Eachus, Herbert and Griffin with Governor Codey and Secretary Kuperus at Drumthwacket.

► **NAAMO Conference** -- New Jersey hosted a successful conference of the North American Agricultural Marketing Officials (NAAMO) from July 17-21, 2005. The organization, which covers all 50 states, Canada and Mexico, is devoted to improving the marketing of its members' agricultural products both domestically and internationally. Thought-provoking seminars included marketing to an increasingly diverse population in the U.S. and the decreasing role of supermarkets as the primary retail outlets for food purchases as they are replaced by "big box" stores, wholesale clubs and even dollar stores.

► **Peach Media Day** -- The New Jersey Peach Promotion Council spotlighted the state's peach industry at Terhune Orchards in Lawrence Township on August 4, 2005. During a tour of the farm's peach orchard, owner Gary Mount spoke of the "mating disruption" technique developed by Rutgers University, which uses twist ties with a female moth's scent to confuse male moths and dramatically reduce the rate of reproduction and Pam Mount illustrated different techniques on how to preserves peaches.



Pam Mount makes presentation during Peach Media Day at Terhune Orchards in Princeton.

Goal 5: Provide Access to Fresh and Nutritious Foods for Children, the Needy and Other New Jersey Citizens

Implement food and nutrition assistance programs to maximize participation by eligible New Jersey citizens, and strengthen agriculture's relationship with the food industry.

- ▶ **Year-round Need for Hunger Relief Efforts Highlighted Throughout the State** - The Department distributed Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) funding totaling \$500,000 to the Department of Agriculture's contracted emergency feeding organizations, located throughout New Jersey this year. TANF is a federal cash assistance program for welfare clients, administered in the state by the Department of Human Services.



The Department presented more than 30 cartons of non-perishable food items to the Mercer Street Friends Cooperative in Trenton in November through the second annual Diane Fitzpatrick Memorial Food Drive. Diane Fitzpatrick was the long-time coordinator of the Division of Food and Nutrition's Emergency Food Assistance Program.

Secretary Kuperus with Phyllis Stoolmacher of Mercer St. Friends & Kathy Kuser, Dir of Div of Food and Nutrition

Secretary Kuperus visited a soup kitchen at Covenant Presbyterian Orthodox Church in Vineland in March to view the operation and offer his support for the efforts of the volunteers who give their time every week to feed hot meals to between 50 and 90 people. In December, he helped serve holiday meals at the Goodwill Rescue Mission in Newark in December 2005. He then assisted in the distribution of food bags at St. Lawrence Church's food pantry in Lindenwold.

In 2005, the Department of Agriculture received 9,980,611 pounds of USDA donated commodities. The Emergency Food Assistance Program provided the food to its six contracted emergency feeding operations, who then redistributed the donated commodities to its network of 660 local pantries, soup kitchens and homeless shelters.

- ▶ **WIC and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program** -- One hundred and ninety-four farmer vendors were certified to participate in the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) & Seniors Farmers Market Nutrition Program in 2005. The program makes available locally grown fresh fruits, vegetables, and herbs to nutritionally at-risk pregnant, breast-feeding, or post-partum women; children two to five years old; and eligible seniors age 60 and older. Eligible participants receive four \$5 vouchers valid through November 30 to purchase locally grown produce from certified farmer vendors. In 2004, there were more than 65,000 WIC participants and almost 40,000 eligible senior participants. The vendors benefited from over \$2 million available through the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Coupons could be redeemed in 2005 at 149 roadside stands, 11 youth farmstands and 76 community farmers markets throughout the state.

- ▶ **School Breakfast Program** -- The success of the Department's mandated school breakfast program continues to grow. During the 2004/2005 school year, more than

132,000 children from 1,600 schools participated daily and received benefits from the program. To support the mandate, \$642,000 in added funding was added to the program in the Fiscal Year 2006 budget. The funding has allowed 68 additional schools to participate with an enrollment of more than 59,000 gaining access to program benefits.

► **Implementation of the School Nutrition Rule** -- In September 2005 a memo was sent to all county administrators, school superintendents, school business officials, non-public sponsors and school food service directors explaining the new regulations, along with hard copies of the newly adopted administrative code. In summer and fall of 2005 various meetings/presentations took place where information regarding the new regulations were presented, including New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association, New Jersey PTA Advocacy workshop, and the New Jersey School Food Service Association Conference. Six regional workshops are planned during the month of March 2006 to provide information and assistance to schools for developing and implementing both the Federal Wellness Policy and the state Nutrition Policy. A tool booklet is being developed to distribute to all schools to assist in implementation of the new regulations.

► **Department of Defense Jersey Fresh Purchases** -- During September through December of 2004, the Department of Defense purchased approximately \$1 million worth of Jersey blueberries, peaches, Romaine mix, tomatoes, grape tomatoes and cucumbers.

► **Hurricane Relief Efforts** -- The collection and delivery of apples to Hurricane Katrina survivors through Second Harvest took place in October at Robson's Farm and Greenhouse in Wrightstown, Burlington County, Zee Orchards in Mullica Hill, Gloucester County and at Windy Brow Orchards in Newton. At Robson's, volunteers used their packing facilities to pack donated apples into 40-pound boxes. FFA chapters aided in the collection and trucking of the donated apples, as did volunteers from AmeriCorps, arranged through the New Jersey Office of the Public Defender. At Windy Brow, Secretary Kuperus and Newton FFA Chapter members packed apples.



Secretary Kuperus packs apples w/Newton FFA at Windy Brow Orchards

Ted Foulk and Daniel Wunderlich help unload round bales of hay from a truck to be put onto the rail car.



Thanks to generous donations from New Jersey farmers, their suppliers, and other agricultural organizations, the Department of Agriculture coordinated and shipped one 60-foot rail car of hay and fencing supplies to the Gulf States in November. A working agreement was developed that was key to the implementation of this shipment as well as being a model for other states to follow. The Department is working with groups such as FARM AID, the American Horse Council and CSX Rail Company.

This joint effort will be used as a model for future shipments to the Gulf area.

Animal Response: Through the New Jersey Animal Emergency Working Group (NJAEWG), the Division of Animal Health coordinated the dissemination of pertinent information; identification of shelter space for displaced animals; tracking of those animals;

availability of animal care providers for possible deployment to the affected area; development of animal-fostering forms; and, compilation of a list of people willing to foster animals.

Goal 6: Promote Agricultural Education, Awareness and Involvement

Ensure the sustainability of New Jersey's agricultural industry through agricultural education, youth development, training opportunities, and successful communication with the agricultural community, general public and all levels of government.

► **Farmland Preservation Newsletter** -- The State Agriculture Development Committee in the summer published the first issue of Farmland Preservation News, a newsletter intended to update landowners and other stakeholders on the latest developments in the Farmland Preservation Program and other issues that affect them. The newsletter will be published on a regular basis and distributed to all landowners in the program, county agriculture development boards, and other preservation partners and interested parties.

► **Seafood Report** -- In September, a report detailing the importance of the seafood and aquaculture industries to New Jersey and New Jersey agriculture was released. *New Jersey Fishing and Aquaculture: Harvesting the Garden State's Water* explains the historical impact of the industries on the state and how they fit into its future. The report can be viewed at www.jerseyseafood.nj.gov/seafoodreport.pdf.



► **Fruit and Vegetable Pilot Program** -- Secretary

Kuperus visited with second-graders at the Frankford Township School in Branchville, one of 11 schools participating in the state's Fruit and Vegetable Pilot Program, as they sampled the September vegetable. The program is administered through the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, supported by funds from the 2004 United States Department of Agriculture Team Nutrition Grant. The program's goal is to expose children to new, healthier foods and increase their fruit and vegetable consumption. The Secretary

Secretary Kuperus with Frankford Township students as they sample red peppers as part of program.



also helped harvest fall fruits and vegetables from the school's garden.

► **Jersey Equine** -- A new website was created for New Jersey's equine industry at www.jerseyequine.nj.gov. The site includes information about the New Jersey Sire Stakes Program, Jersey Bred, the horse racing industry, and horse breeding and development, provides an equine calendar of events, provides helpful equine links and has a listing of New Jersey equine facilities.

► **Jersey Grown Public Service Announcement** -- To promote awareness about *Jersey Grown* and New Jersey's significant Christmas Tree industry, a public service announcement ran on television stations in the New York/New Jersey/Philadelphia media markets. It is estimated that the PSA's generated \$110,000 in free advertising for *Jersey Grown* and the state's Christmas tree growers. The 2002 U.S. Census of Agriculture ranked New Jersey seventh in the nation in the number of Christmas tree growers. Of New Jersey's 9,924 farms, 1,167 were cut Christmas tree farms, covering 7,628 acres. Those New Jersey farmers provide more than 132,000 families with Christmas trees annually.

► **New Jersey Grown Community Awards** -- The New Jersey Grown Community Awards Program has been created to recognize exemplary



examples of design and excellent use and maintenance in the promotion of Jersey Grown plants by municipalities. The program was announced at the annual state League of Municipalities meeting in November.

► **Agricultural, Food and Natural Resource Education Promoted in Effort to Sustain Agriculture in New Jersey** -- Secretary Kuperus urged school administrators and Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources Education (AFNR) teachers throughout the state to support their AFNR programs and guide their students to careers in agriculture. In April, he encouraged new AFNR teachers in Hackettstown and Phillipsburg High Schools to continue in the program. In November, the Secretary highlighted the need for more agricultural industry workers during visits to Cape May County Technical School and Buena Regional High School.

► **2005 Envirothon** -- Thirty-seven teams competed in the 12th annual NJ Envirothon held in May 2005 at North Branch Park in Somerset County. This event tests the knowledge of students in six environmental subject areas including wildlife, soils, aquatics, forestry, current environmental issues and a team presentation. High Tech High School team #1 from Hudson County was the 1st place winner and advanced to the Canon Envirothon competition in Springfield, Missouri. The New Jersey Envirothon is sponsored by the New Jersey Association of Conservation Districts, USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service, Rutgers Cooperative Extension and the NJ Department of Environmental Protection.

Students participate in Soil competition at 2005 Envirothon in Bridgewater



► **2005 Conservation Education Awards Ceremony** -- An awards ceremony in May 2005 at the New Jersey State Museum in Trenton honored the 24 winners of the 2005 poster & bumper sticker contest, whose theme was “Celebrate Conservation”. In addition, the three National Poster Contest winners from New Jersey were presented with Legislative and Congressional Resolutions and this year’s Envirothon winners were recognized.

► **Youth Farmstand Project** -- Statewide in 2005, 73 at-risk/special needs youth participated in the Rutgers Cooperative Research and Extension Youth Farmstand Program. More than 3,300 customers in Trenton, Woodbury, Paulsboro, Glassboro, Atlantic City and Pleasantville purchased \$22,000 in *Jersey Fresh* produce. Almost \$3,000 in profits were distributed among the participants, based upon stand sales and hours worked. In August 2005, Secretary Kuperus visited the Youth Farmstand in Bayonne. Eleven Bayonne High School Students sold freshly picked *Jersey Fresh* produce during the summer and fall, learning about New Jersey agriculture and how to operate a successful business.



Secretary Kuperus and Senator/Bayonne Mayor Joseph Doria at Youth Farmstand Project.

▶ **Junior Breeder Program** -- The New Jersey Junior Breeder Young Farmer Advisory Committee hosted its first annual Livestock Auction in New Egypt in April. Almost 100 animals were consigned and the entire day was a huge success with 96 buyers registered for the event.



▶ **New Jersey FFA President Honored**
-- New Jersey FFA President Heather White was honored by the New Jersey Senate in February with a resolution presented on the Senate Floor by Senator Joseph Palaia of Monmouth County and Acting Governor Codey.

Heather White and her family on the Senate Floor with Senator Palaia and Governor Richard Codey.

▶ **FFA Chapters Increase** -- Two new FFA chapters were chartered in 2005 at Northern Burlington Middle School and Bergen County Technical School, Paramus Campus bringing the total number of chapters in New Jersey to 37.

▶ **FFA State Convention** -- More than 425 FFA members, advisers and guests from across the state attended the 76th annual New Jersey State FFA Convention in May at Rutgers University in New Brunswick to honor fellow members for their achievements, elect new officers and conduct other business. More than \$8,200 in college scholarships was awarded to FFA members, with an additional \$5,300 in awards presented to FFA chapters and individuals. Scholarships and awards were sponsored by the State and National FFA Foundations, the State FFA Association and other agricultural organizations.



FFA President Heather White presents Jack Gallagher with FFA's Blue and Gold Award

▶ **Jersey Bred Festival** -- Sixteen different breed groups of New Jersey horses competed for \$2,600 in prize money during the 37th Annual New Jersey Bred All Breed Horse Show in September at the Horse Park of New Jersey at Stone Tavern. The show featured only New Jersey bred horses.

▶ **Livestock Symposium** -- An educational symposium aimed at 4-H youth, FFA students, breed association youth and their volunteer leaders and advisors was held in the spring, covering all aspects of animal agriculture and providing a non-competitive atmosphere for youth from different project areas, counties and schools to meet. The March program was held at New Egypt High School in New Egypt, Ocean County, and covered sheep, dairy and meat goats, poultry and rabbits. The April event, covering dairy and beef cattle and horses, was held at the Gloucester County 4-H Center, the Eachus Farm (dairy), and Gloucester County Fairgrounds (beef and equine).

▶ **Organic Certification Workshops** -- The New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA) and the Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Jersey (NOFA-NJ) sponsored workshops in March in Gloucester, Monmouth and Hunterdon Counties to assist farmers who are seeking organic certification. The certification process can take four to six months. Growers interested in selling organic products learned more about the requirements for certification and opportunities in the organic marketplace.

▶ **Value-Added Workshops** -- The Rutgers University Food Innovation Center, in partnership with the New Jersey Department of Agriculture and United State Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development, sponsored a series of workshops in 2005 on value added grant opportunities for agricultural producers and producer groups. The USDA Value Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program is an outstanding tool that has great potential to help increase the profitability of an enterprise. VAPGs may be used for planning activities and working capital for marketing value-added agricultural products and for farm-based renewable energy. Since its inception in 2001, the VAPG program has awarded \$679,200 in grants to New Jersey applicants. Workshops were held in Warren, Middlesex, Cumberland and Sussex Counties.

Goal 7: Guarantee the Delivery of Quality Services by a Well-Trained and Motivated Workforce

Produce quality in all we do through a diverse, effectively managed, highly trained and committed staff supported by efficient use of available technology and resources in a work environment that fosters excellence.

▶ **Quarterly Spending and Budget Review** – The Department has implemented a quarterly monitoring procedure whereby all state, federal, grant and dedicated accounts are reviewed and reconciled in compliance with the Department’s budget. This more frequent review allows the Department to identify issues and expand on opportunities in a more timely fashion and allows for a more efficient financial operation.

▶ **Decentralization of Purchasing** – In an effort to more efficiently manage Department wide purchasing, training and authorization was made to allow all Divisions access to place purchase orders onto the Treasury system pending review of the central office. This decentralization reduced processing time from 14 to 3 days.

▶ **Stockroom Inventory System Enabled** – Department instituted a stockroom warehousing system whereby general office supplies are purchased centrally and ordered in-house amongst our Divisions. This reduces the amount of purchases made each quarter, and, in turn, simplifies payment reconciliation and saves on processing time. It is estimated that the Department can save approximately \$25,000 annually in processing and reconciliation time through this central warehousing process.

▶ **AGLINK Established** – In an effort to better facilitate emergency response and better communication with our Department staff, AGLINK, a telephone system for notifying employees, was established. This system, using existing telephone infrastructure, allows employees to call in during an emergency to determine reporting times, deployment or need for essential personnel.

▶ **Information Technology** - The Department continues to make investment in its technological resources. The Department is finalizing development of an Information Technology Strategic Plan that will guide its needs, resources and financial commitments over the next three to five years. In addition, the Department is working in the development of partnerships with other State agencies to share resources and better coordinate the flow of information. *Web-based Voucher System:* In the area of technology, the Department



implemented a web-based voucher payment system for schools participating in the National School Lunch, School Breakfast, After School Snack and Special Milk programs. This allows for sponsors to receive program payments within 10 to 15 days instead of the 30 to 60 days in the former paper-based billing system. Implemented in the fall of 2003, the new system has netted the Department cost-savings realized through significant reductions in staff time associated with the handling, processing and mailing of paper claims and vouchers. The payment system has been streamlined and worker productivity has increased. Now, all public school program sponsors receive their federal and state nutrition funds in a timelier manner. Non-public schools receive expedited payments through the traditional state process.

► **Katrina Apple Picking** – In October, 25 Department of Agriculture employees donated their time to pick apples at Zee Orchards in Mullica Hill for packing and shipping to Hurricane Katrina victims.



The Office of the Secretary's Mary Tovar reaches for an apple at Zee Orchards.

► **Second Annual Food Drive** – Department employees generously donated 30 cartons of food for holiday distribution in the Second Annual Diane Fitzpatrick Memorial Food Drive. Diane Fitzpatrick was the long-time coordinator of the Division of Food and Nutrition's Emergency Food Assistance Program. The 2005 proceeds were donated to Mercer Street Friends Food Cooperative in Trenton.



Food drive proceeds, as well as a grant check, were presented to Mercer Street Friends. Phillip Gambutti, Secretary Kuperus, JoAnn Fitzpatrick, Hope Holland, Phyllis Stoolmacher, and Kathy Kuser.

Meet the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture...



R. Ken Totten
Board President
Hunterdon County
Grain/Hay Industry



Phillip D. Prickett, Jr.
Board Vice-President
Burlington County
Grain/Hay Industry



Mary Jo Herbert
Board Member
Mercer County
Equine Industry



Milton "Woody" Eachus
Board Member
Salem County
Dairy Industry



William V. Griffin
Board Member
Middlesex County
Nursery Industry



Noble F. McNaughton
Board Member
Burlington County
Nursery Industry



Robert "Matty" Matarazzo
Board Member
Warren County
Fruit Industry



Peter L. Melick
Board Member
Hunterdon County
Vegetable Industry